

## Budget Electronics

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

### Drumfire DF-2000 Percussion Synthesizer



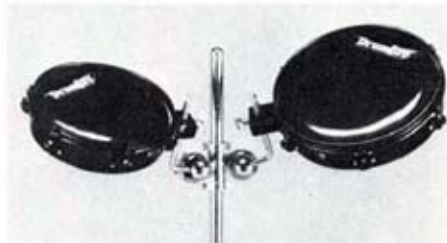
The Drumfire *DF-2000* is a two-channel, rack-mountable analog drum synth. Each channel on the *DF-2000* is capable of two different sounds, which are changeable at the front panel or via a footswitch. All sounds are set up by the user. This is easily done; the two channels each have double sets of controls. The "manual" mode has color-coded rotary knobs, while the "manual preset" mode controls are smaller black knobs. Each channel has a push button (with LEDs) to select either manual or preset. (I can't understand why it's called "preset"; there's no inner memory storage or lock-out provision preventing the knobs from being turned after you've found the sound you want.) Also, each channel has a push button to turn that channel on or off, without shutting down the entire unit. The channels can self-trigger via yet another push button (with LED) on the control panel. This enables you to sample your sound setup at the panel, rather than at the drumkit. The *DF-2000* will trigger from mic's, metronomes, and drum machines, as well as via sensor pickups and drumpads, which are both produced by Drumfire. More on those two later.

Controls for each channel are: sensitivity, oscillator 1 and 2 decay, noise decay, sweep, pitch, wave shape, noise filter, balance, volume, and impact click. The rear of the unit has 1/4" jacks for separate channel outputs and inputs, as well as for a remote footswitch selector. It should be noted that, although the *DF-2000* is capable of producing four different analog sounds, the sounds themselves cannot be individually inputted and outputted; only the two main channels can be triggered or routed to a mixing board.

All sounds are typically analog. If it's a realistic drum sound you want, you won't get it from this particular unit. Since there are no true preset sounds, all parameters of

a sound must be set up individually, and the entire operation and sound sculpting of the unit are in the hands of the user. The control dials are quite sensitive, and the most minute alteration of settings will alter the sound. Experimentation is the only way to get to the sound you want. It also may be a good idea to treat the sounds with EQ or gating to get more "current" drum sounds and effects. (Drumfire also makes an eight-channel stereo mixer to aid in this.) The Drumfire's sounds are ones we've all heard before from other analog units. What sets it apart from the rest, though, is its extremely reasonable price of \$195!

Two companions to the *DF-2000* are available: drum trigger pads and sensor pickups. Drumfire makes 10" and 12" round electronic pads. They have real drumheads with foam underneath, and are fully tensionable. The shell is black, the heads are black, the hoops are black—even the tension rods are black, and the pads have black plywood bases.



A W jack on the side of the shell allows connection to the *DF-2000*. The pads will fit onto almost any L-arm style holder. (Drumfire also has a double holder stand available at \$127.) The pads have a good feel and natural rebound, and they are pretty well impact-dampened. The 10" pads retail at \$115; the 12" at \$132.

Drumfire's sensor pickups are designed to be mounted onto an acoustic drum. The sensors are basically one-inch rubberized squares with an adhesive patch on the pickup side. A cable with 1/4" plug is permanently attached, and (as far as I can tell from only seeing two of them) they are all color-coded. The sensors allow triggering of the control unit from virtually anything—a drum, a cymbal, a tape box—anything that you can strike and the sensor will adhere to. The sensors do work well. I haven't seen any specs on them, but I imagine they would trigger other drum synth units, also. A set of five retails at \$75.

As I stated earlier, the *DF-2000*'s remarkably low price makes it worthy of attention on that attribute alone. I know of

no other unit near the \$195 price that has the features of the Drumfire. If you can't afford the digital bucks, it may be worth your while to take a look at this unit.

### Gretsch ED-200 Pro Dual



As a follow-up to its *Blackhawk* electronic drumkit (reviewed *MD*: May '85), Gretsch has developed the *ED-200 Pro Dual* setup. The system consists of two round black pads, a rack-mount brain, plus a floor stand on which to mount the pads. The pads are approximately 11" in diameter, and have a somewhat hardened playing surface, though not as rigid as the old Simmons *SDS5* pads had. When playing the *Pro Dual* pads, your acoustic stick sound is quite audible.



The *Pro Dual* mixer brain has two channels, each with controls to adjust sensitivity, decay, bend, pitch, noise/tone balance, and volume. Each channel also has a selector knob, which enables you to choose between preset bass drum, snare drum, high, mid, and low tom sounds. The "manual" setting allows full use of the individual function controls. When modifying the presets, all controls are operable, except for pitch.

The rear of the brain has a 1/4" master output jack, plus XLR jacks for the two pad inputs. If desired, headphones may be used, via the master output jack. An AC adapter is used to power the unit.

A double tom-tom stand is included with the setup. It has a double-braced tripod base, with a memory lock at the height tube. Atop the tube is a tri-hole adapter block that accepts the two tubular mounting arms. These arms have a concealed ratchet adjustment and pass through the pad shells.

The preset sounds of the *Pro Dual* are very electronic-sounding and maybe even a little "behind the times." They aren't as powerful and "drummy" as other analog sounds I've heard, but for \$399 complete, the *Pro Dual* may be useful for getting budget-conscious drummers started into the field of electronic drums.

